

# The Ichor of Black Hollow

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The town of Black Hollow had long whispered about the specter in the woods, but none dared to venture too deep. I was always too curious for my own good, and that curiosity led me into the heart of the dark forest, toward a place where sunlight barely touched and shadows twisted like living things.

It started as a faint, spectral glow seeping from beneath the roots of a massive, gnarled tree. The air was heavy, thick with an unnatural chill, and my breath hung in front of me in clouds. The wind carried a faint, sickly sweet odor that I couldn't place, though my gut told me to turn back. My feet, however, moved of their own accord, as if the forest itself had keen eyes set on me.

I reached out to the glowing earth, brushing aside dirt and debris, and there it was. Black ichor, thicker than blood, pulsed from beneath the ground like the very lifeblood of the woods. Its slow crawl toward my fingertips sent a shiver through my body, a deep, primal fear whispering that whatever this was, it was alive—aware.

Suddenly, a low moan echoed through the trees, and the light from the ichor flickered as if in response. From the shadows, a figure emerged. She was barely more than a ghost, a spectral woman whose translucent form wavered with the breeze. Her eyes, hollow and pale, met mine, and I felt an icy grip around my throat.

Her voice, when it came, was a sharp hiss that sliced through the silence. "You've disturbed him," she whispered, her words dripping with menace. "He waits for those who draw his ichor."

Before I could react, the ground beneath me trembled. The ichor bubbled and spread, oozing like liquid shadow, and from the darkness rose something terrible. Its form was shifting, indistinct, but its eyes—cold and burning with hunger—locked onto me with a keen, predatory focus.

I tried to run, but the spectral woman stood in my path. Her face twisted into a grin, and she stepped closer. "You will be his," she whispered.

I stumbled, falling into the ichor, feeling it wrap around me like tendrils. My skin burned, as if it were consuming me, and the last thing I saw before the darkness swallowed me whole was the specter's smile, triumphant and wicked.

In Black Hollow, the ichor still flows, and the spectral woman still roams, waiting for the next curious soul to stumble into the woods. The forest keeps its secrets, and it keeps those who dare to seek them.